

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 DHA-02 ORM-02 VO-03 SCA-01 INSE-00
PA-01 PRS-01 USIE-00 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00
DODE-00 L-03 H-01 INRE-00 SSO-00 IO-13 SS-15
NSCE-00 OMB-01 TRSE-00 /061 W
-----081506 181242Z /44

O 181140Z AUG 77
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5281

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BANGKOK 18317

EO 11652: N/A
TAGS: SREF
SUBJECT: INDOCHINESE REFUGEE BOAT CASES: APPROACHES TO
COUNTRIES OF FIRST ASYLUM

REF: STATE 190404

SUMMARY: CHARGE HAS SEPARATELY APPROACHED FONMIN UPADIT
AND INTERIOR MINISTER SAMAK AS INSTRUCTED REFTEL. IN
ADDITION HE HAD LENGTHY DISCUSSIONS ON REFUGEE PROBLEM
WITH INTERIOR DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY DAMRONG AND MFA
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS DIRECTOR GENERAL PHIRAPHONG
KASEMSI.

BOTH UPADIT AND SAMAK CONVEYED THEIR DEEP APPRECIATION
FOR USG DETERMINATION TO PAROLE INTO THE US 15,000 INDO-
CHINESE. SAMAK AND DAMRONG ALSO INDICATED THAT RTG WOULD
CONTINUE ITS PRESENT POLICY WITH REGARD TO BOAT CASES WHILE
STRESSING IMPORTANCE OF OTHER NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES ALSO
ACCEPTING RESPONSIBILITY AS COUNTRIES OF FIRST ASYLUM.
BOTH ALSO INDICATED WILLINGNESS TO DISCUSS "RE-SETTLE-
MENT/SELF SUFFICIENCY" QUESTION WITH US AND OTHERS.

1. AS INSTRUCTED, CHARGE CONVEYED SUBSTANCE REFTEL TO
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FONMIN UPADIT ON AUG 16. UPADIT WHO IS NOT DEEPLY
INVOLVED IN REFUGEE PROBLEM, EXPRESSED HIS GOVERNMENT'S
DEEP APPRECIATION FOR USG ACTION IN HELPING ALLEVIATE
BURDEN OF THIS MAJOR HUMANITARIAN PROBLEM WHICH THAILAND HAS
BORNE. HE ALSO INDICATED RTG FULLY UNDERSTOOD USG CONCERNS RE
REFUGEE.

2. IN LENGTHY AUGUST 18 MEETING, INTERIOR MINISTER SAMAK ALSO CONVEYED RTG APPRECIATION FOR OUR ACTION AND INDICATED THAT RTG WOULD CONTINUE ITS PRESENT POLICIES REGARDING ACCEPTING REFUGEE BOAT CASES AS COUNTRY OF INITIAL ASYLUM. AT SAME TIME HE STRESSED IMPORTANCE OF THAILAND NOT APPEARING TO BE ONLY COUNTRY ACCEPTING THESE BOAT CASES.

3. IN OUTLINING RTG POLICY ON REFUGEES SAMAK SAID THAT GOVERNMENT HAD THREE OBJECTIVES:

A VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION TO HOME COUNTRIES
B MOVEMENT TO THIRD COUNTRIES, AND
C RESETTLEMENT OF THE REMAINING NUMBERS IN THAILAND.
WITH REGARD TO VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION, SAMAK SAID THAT HE RECOGNIZED THAT THIS WAS UNREALISTIC. US GOVT ACTION IN TAKING 10,000 OUT OF THAILAND AS WELL AS NUMBERS TAKEN BY OTHER FRIENDLY COUNTRIES IS ALSO RECOGNIZED AS BEING ONLY A PARTIAL SOLUTION. AT SAME TIME THE REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT IN THAILAND REMAINS A SENSITIVE POLITICAL ISSUE.

4. SAMAK SAID HE HAD BEEN GIVING SERIOUS THOUGHT TO RESETTLEMENT PROBLEM. HE HAD IN MIND TRYING AT LEAST TO MOVE FORWARD WITH A PILOT PROJECT INVOLVING RESETTLEMENT OF A MIXED GROUP TWO THIRDS THAI AND ONE THIRD LAO OUT OF NONGKHAI CAMP. (WHILE SAMAK WAS IMPRECISE, IT IS
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RUMORED AREA HE HAS IN MIND MIGHT BE LOCATED IN ONE OF MAJOR LAO INFILTRATION ROUTES.)

5. FOR HIS PART, CHARGE INDICATED OUR WILLINGNESS TO DISCUSS WITH RTG AND UNHCR THE GENERAL QUESTION OF RESETTLEMENT IN THAILAND. SAMAK EXPRESSED CLEAR INTEREST IN THIS AND APPRECIATION FOR OUR CONCERN AND THAT OF OTHERS REGARDING THIS PROBLEM, AND THEIR WILLINGNESS TO CONSIDER ASSISTING.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BANGKOK 18317

6. IN LENGTHY AUGUST 16 DISCUSSION WITH DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY DAMRONG, WHO IS KEY OPERATIONAL FIGURE ON REFUGEES, CHARGE ACCOMPANIED BY GOSS AND ROSENBLATT, ALSO TOUCHED ON BOTH BOAT CASE PROBLEM AND REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT/SELF SUFFICIENCY QUESTION ALONG LINES REFTEL. DAMRONG INDICATED THAT RTG WOULD CONTINUE ITS POLICY WITH REGARD TO BOAT CASES. INITIALLY HE NOTED THAT PRESENT POLICY WOULD CONTINUE "WITH STRICTER ENFORCEMENT". WHEN PRESSED BY CHARGE ON THIS, HE DROPPED REFERENCE TO "STRICTER ENFORCEMENT".

7. AT SAME TIME DAMRONG ALSO INDICATED WILLINGNESS TO ENGAGE IN DISCUSSIONS WITH US AND OTHERS ON LONGER TERM ASPECTS OF REFUGEE QUESTION. HE WAS CAREFUL TO POINT OUT THAT IN HIS VIEW CONDITIONS FOR "PERMANENT RESETTLEMENT" WOULD NOT EXIST UNTIL NUMBERS OF REFUGEES IN COUNTRY WERE CLEARLY DECLINING. AT SAME TIME HE SAID THAT RTG EFFORTS TO CREATE GREATER REFUGEE "SELF SUFFICIENCY" WERE VERY MUCH ON HIS MIND AND HE WOULD WELCOME AND WOULD BE PREPARED FOR DIALOGUE WITH US, UNHCR AND OTHER INTERESTED EMBASSIES, IN THIS AREA.

8. THE AUGUST 17 MEETING WITH MFA DIRECTOR GENERAL PHIRAPONG MOST NOTABLE FOR EMPHASIS HE GAVE TO JULY 22 AGREEMENT WITH UNHCR. HE INDICATED THAT AGREEMENT WOULD PROVIDE BASIS FOR FUTURE RTG APPROACH TO REFUGEE PROBLEM. HE SPOKE WISTFULLY OF REPATRIATION
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AS ONE ASPECT OF SOLUTION BUT SEMED TO REALIZE THAT SUCH A PLAN WAS IMPRACTICAL GIVEN INABILITY FOR EVEN UNHCR TO DEAL WITH THE INDOCHINESE COMMUNIST GOVERNMENTS. HE REFERRED TO AN APPARENTLY EARLIER ABORTIVE UNHCR NEGOTIATION WITH LPDR ON REPATRIATION FROM THAILAND OF REFUGEES.

9. COMMENT: AS INDICATED ABOVE, RTG WILL CONTINUE ITS PRESENT POLICY WITH REGARD TO BOAT CASES, WHILE OBVIOUSLY HOPING WE WILL EXERT PRESSURE ON ITS NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES TO SIMILARLY ACCEPT BOAT CASES. FURTHER RTG APPEARS WILLING TO ENGAGE IN DIALOGUE WITH US AND OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES ON QUESTION OF FUTURE OF THE REMAINING REFUGEES IN THAILAND INCLUDING SOME FORM OF RESETTLEMENT; OR

AS DAMRONG PUT IT "SELF SUFFICIENCY".

10. AT SAME TIME UNHCR EFFORTS WITH RTG IN THIS FIELD SEEM TO HAVE MUDDIED THE WATER SOMEWHAT PARTICULARLY WITH REGARD TO QUESTION OF DEFINITION OF REFUGEES AND REPATRIATION. (SEPTTEL GIVES SUBSTANCE OF UNHCR-RTG JULY 22 AGREEMENT WHICH WE WERE ABLE TO GET ONLY AFTER SOME DIFFICULTY.)

11. WE BELIEVE THAT IT IS IMPORTANT NOW FOR WASHINGTON AGENCIES TO DETERMINE SOON DIRECTLY AS WE WISH TO TAKE WITH RTG, UNHCR AND OTHERS ON RESETTLEMENT PROBLEM. OTHERWISE WE ARE IN DANGER OF RTG AND UNHCR MOVING IN ONE DIRECTION WHILE WE ARE CONSIDERING OTHER OPTIONS. OBVIOUSLY IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT WE ESTABLISH BETTER LINES OF COMMUNICATION WITH UNHCR BOTH HERE AND IN GENEVA.
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Message Attributes

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